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Fact Sheet #14
July 31, 2009



Emergency Response Quality Assurance

Santa Rosa County works diligently daily to improve the emergency response system in order to best serve you and your family. Santa Rosa County is now a model for excellence in emergency response times, successful responses, and in depth response evaluations. We have done this work with one goal in mind: to protect, provide prompt emergency services and help the citizens of Santa Rosa County.

In Earlier Times...

In the early days of 9-1-1, dispatchers were on their own without a protocol system to accurately and consistently dispatch needed support or assign the necessary resources to the variety of calls coming in to their centers. There were no key questions to narrow and focus calls or pre-arrival instructions such as CPR to help the caller until the needed emergency services arrived. For the most part, dispatchers told callers that help was on its way and after that, the dispatcher would disconnect the line to move on to the next caller.

In Current Times...

Call levels are determined by the dispatch center using the Medical Priority Dispatch System®, which provides the dispatcher with predetermined questions to ask the caller. Based on the answers, the calls are assigned a response determinant of Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta or Echo. Alpha determinants are calls where the patient does not have any life-threatening symptoms. Echo determinants are the highest level and are assigned when the patient is experiencing symptoms that are life threatening. The system also allows the dispatchers to act as the "first" first responder. Based on a series of questions dispatchers are able to guide them through life saving techniques to perform until emergency responders arrive on scene. Our dispatchers have even delivered several babies over the phone.

Santa Rosa County Emergency Communication Specialists or "dispatchers" work as a team on each call to assess patient needs, guide callers through first aid techniques and ensure the needed emergency services are quickly dispatched to the scene.



How Quality Assurance Works

Patient care will start by the dispatcher providing instructions to the caller to assist the patient while the ambulance and first responders are en route. This procedure does not delay the dispatching of the emergency responders who are being radio activated by another dispatcher. To further enhance the system, Lifeguard Ambulance Service uses a systematic posting procedure that allows ambulances to move to different posts depending on call location to cover the county more effectively. Compliance is monitored and all calls not meeting the required response time are reviewed by Lifeguard Ambulance Service Supervisors, Santa Rosa County Medical Director and Santa Rosa County staff.

Santa Rosa County's Quality Assurance

Lifeguard Ambulance Service

Santa Rosa County contracts with Lifeguard Ambulance Service for emergency and non-emergency medical transport. All contract ambulance services are provided at the EMT-Paramedic level. It is a performance based contract using a measurement format of fractile response times. Measurement includes a reliability factor and measures time intervals between the time Lifeguard Ambulance Service personnel are dispatched and the time properly equipped ambulance service vehicle arrives on the scene. Since Lifeguard Ambulance Service was awarded the county's certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity they have met or exceeded contract requirements each quarter.

Lifeguard Ambulance Service Minimum Contract Response Times

	Life-threatening-Echo	Medical-Alpha
Urban	10 minutes	20 minutes
Rural	18 minutes	25 minutes



The Goal of Quality

- ◇ To ensure that all employees understand policy, practice, procedures, and protocol.
- ◇ To determine if the policy, practice, procedure, and protocol themselves are safe, efficient, and effective.
- ◇ Regularly analyze and review to improve service to our residents.

Dispatching is not a job for just anyone. Emergency Medical Dispatchers must have the ability to handle complex situations at a rapid pace and have the ability to appropriately deal with human beings in great distress. Quality Management improves compliance and overall effectiveness.



How does the Communication Center Rate your Dispatchers?

- ◇ An average of 20 to 25 calls are randomly pulled weekly for grading.
- ◇ Grading is done by window based software called AQUA™.
- ◇ Each dispatcher must achieve a compliance score of 96 percent per quarter. This is higher than the recommended 90 percent by the Medical Priority system.
- ◇ Dispatchers are required to read the protocol as written, unless clarifying questions are added to help enhance the answer to questions.
- ◇ Dispatcher's percentage points are deducted when they deviate from written protocols.
- ◇ Dispatchers must complete a certification process and must re-certify every two years.

The primary purpose is to objectively measure each calltaker's performance through random case review in a consistent manner.